

## PRINCIPLE 2: STATE-DEVELOPED DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

### 2.A DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STATE-BASED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (1)** Did the SEA propose a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, and a high-quality plan to implement this system no later than the 2012-2013 school year, that is likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (2)** Does the SEA's accountability system provide differentiated recognition, accountability, and support for all LEAs in the State and for all Title I schools in those LEAs based on (1) student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, and other subjects at the State's discretion, for all students and all subgroups of students identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II); (2) graduation rates for all students and all subgroups; and (3) school performance and progress over time, including the performance and progress of all subgroups?

Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system create incentives and provide support to close achievement gaps for all subgroups of students?

Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system include interventions specifically focused on improving the performance of English Learners and students with disabilities?

Did the SEA provide a plan that ensures that the system will be implemented in LEAs and schools no later than the 201-2013 school year?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (3)** Did the SEA include student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, priority, and Focus Schools? Does the SEA's weighting of the included assessments result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve the State's college- and career-ready standards?

Connecticut schools and districts are currently classified based on the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which, among other things, provides funding for professional development, instructional materials, and other educational programs; emphasizes equal access to education and aims to reduce achievement gaps; and requires school accountability. While accountability systems under NCLB intended to raise expectations for all students and to hold districts and schools accountable for student progress, the law does not adequately recognize progress by schools that falls short of federal thresholds. We believe the proposed recognition, accountability, and support system outlined below is a more appropriate system for Connecticut.

While Connecticut's aggregate performance is strong, the data reveals a troubling achievement gap. Connecticut's achievement gap is among the 10 widest in the nation for every subgroup comparison and has the single largest gap for the majority of subgroups. Additionally, state-level data confirm

large and widening gaps in academic progress, graduation rates and other indicators between the highest performing students and subgroups.

Our lower-performing subgroups are far behind their peers, so we must address this disparity with a sense of urgency. The proposed accountability system is designed to address Connecticut's large achievement gaps by requiring higher rates of growth for historically underperforming subgroups. Connecticut's proposed accountability system holds the state, its districts, and schools accountable for improving the performance of all students. Our accountability system – including our AMOs and our School Performance Index, which are described in the following sections – is also designed to focus on closing gaps in performance and graduation rates.

### **Setting Annual Measurable Objectives**

At the center of our proposed accountability system is a School Achievement Matrix that will give each school a score on a 100-point scale. The School Achievement Matrix will include measures of student achievement, change in student achievement, student growth, college- and career-readiness, subgroup performance and college- and career-readiness, and school climate.

Rather than focusing exclusively on math and reading, our new system will hold schools accountable for mathematics, reading, writing and science.

### **Reward Schools**

The ESEA Flexibility Request defines a "Reward School" as a Title I school that is a "highest-performing school," which has the highest absolute performance over a number of years for the "all students" group and for all subgroups, or a "high-progress school," which is a Title I school that is making the most progress in improving the performance of the "all students" group and making the most progress in increasing graduation rates. A school may not be classified as a reward school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups that are not closing. The ESEA Flexibility Request does not define the state's total number of Reward Schools.

Connecticut will recognize annually the Title I or Title I eligible schools with the highest-performing and highest progress subgroups. Reward Schools will receive celebratory and financial recognition, and may receive flexibility from certain state requirements.

### **Priority Schools**

The ESEA Flexibility Request defines a "Priority School" as a school that has been identified as among the lowest-performing schools in the State based on the achievement of all students. The state must include as Priority Schools Title I or Title I-eligible high schools with graduation rates less than 60 percent, or a Tier I or Tier II school using SIG funds to implement a school intervention model. The total number of Priority Schools in a State must be at least five percent of the Title I schools in the State.

Connecticut will launch the Commissioner's Network – a system of state supports and interventions – to improve these chronically low-performing Priority Schools. The Network will serve as a vehicle for innovative initiatives, a platform for the sharing of best practices, and a model for other schools and districts throughout the state.

### **Focus Schools**

The ESEA Flexibility Request defines a “Focus School” as a Title I school that is contributing to the achievement gap in the State. The Request permits states to choose one of two definitions: schools with the largest within-school performance and graduation gaps between the highest-achieving and lowest-achieving subgroups, or schools that have subgroups with the lowest achievement and graduation rates. Connecticut will choose the latter definition to define Focus Schools. The total number of Focus Schools in a State must equal at least 10 percent of the Title I schools in the State.

Connecticut will ensure that districts have the information, resources, and capacity to design and implement effective, targeted interventions in Focus Schools.

### **Supporting other Title I Schools**

The CSDE will provide support to other struggling Title I schools primarily through our Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) initiative. The CALI initiative focuses on sustainable district-level reform. Through CALI, the CSDE provides district- and school-level support and technical assistance in key areas to create a results-based district accountability system.

### **Building State, District, and School Capacity**

The CSDE will help build district and school capacity through monitoring struggling schools and reducing removing barriers and duplication for districts. The CSDE will examine its practices and determine where mandates, regulations, circular letters, and other requirements create unnecessary and overly burdensome barriers to districts’ work. The CSDE has identified two areas to reduce burden: processes related to certification and professional development, and data reporting requirements.

### **Accountability and Support in the Realigned CSDE**

Connecticut’s Chief Performance Officer (CPO) will lead efforts to provide the CSDE and districts with actionable information about student learning. The CPO will complete and leverage Connecticut’s robust data infrastructure, providing ongoing research and data analysis that will help inform more precisely where problems and opportunities lie in our schools. Identification of best practices for narrowing the achievement gap will be an important function of this research office.

The CPO will work with the Commissioner and the State Board to develop clear metrics for status, progress, and goals for every school, district, and student group in the state as required by the ESEA waiver process. The Department’s accountability system will also help inform the Department’s interventions in low-performing schools and will provide districts with the information they need to more effectively intervene in their low performing schools. In this role, the CPO will provide a central pipeline of information to the Chief Talent Officer and to Chief Turnaround Officer functions.

The Chief Turnaround Officer will work to turn around schools with records of persistent underperformance by providing supports, guidance, interventions, and new strategies. This office will analyze low-performing schools and identify the nuanced leadership, assessment, curriculum, professional development, technology, or other changes necessary to improve educational outcomes. This office will seek out best practices from throughout the state and nation –identifying partners that work with public schools successfully to create the conditions for change.

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (4)** If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, priority, and Focus Schools, it must: provide the percentage of students in the “all students” group that performed at the proficient level on the State’s most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed; and include an explanation of how the included assessments will be weighted in a manner that will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college- and career-ready standards.

The CSDE proposes incorporating the results of writing and science assessments into the accountability framework along with results from reading and mathematics.

When Connecticut developed its accountability system to comply with the requirements of NCLB, we were not required to assess writing, but we continued to do so at considerable expense because of the importance we assign to writing. We are in full agreement with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) who purport that writing is a “tool for thinking” (2004). The NAEP 2007 Writing results suggest that the continuous efforts that Connecticut educators have directed toward writing instruction have benefited our students. The NAEP 2007 results showed that Connecticut’s Grade 8 students had claimed the nation’s top spot in writing performance.

The new accountability model will hold schools and districts accountable for student performance in writing through the School Performance Index (SPI), explained in a later section. While there is a vertical scale in place to measure student growth in reading and mathematics, individual student growth data is not available for the writing assessment. Therefore, writing will be included in the status and change measures but cannot be included as an individual growth measure.

Connecticut’s new system also will hold schools accountable for science, which is tested in Grades 5, 8 and 10. This is an important shift that raises expectations for Connecticut students. We recognize the strong relationship between mathematics and science and the potential through strong STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs to nurture students’ ability to reason analytically and apply knowledge to solve complex problems of all types. We are in full agreement with the Board on Science Education within the National Academy of Sciences that “science, engineering, and technology permeate every aspect of modern life... and some knowledge of science and engineering is required to understand and participate in many major public policy issues of today, as well as to make informed everyday decisions.”<sup>1</sup>

Table 2A.ii.1 provides the percentage of all students that performed at the proficient level on the Connecticut’s most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed. However Connecticut will no longer use the proficiency measure to monitor achievement, as described below.

**Table 2A.1: CMT and CAPT Percent Proficient for Writing and Science**

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10
2010-2011 CMT/CAPT Writing % at/above Proficient	81.1	85.4	88.0	86.1	79.8	81.6	88.6

<sup>1</sup> The brief is available at [http://www7.nationalacademies.org/bose/Frameworks\\_Report\\_Brief.pdf](http://www7.nationalacademies.org/bose/Frameworks_Report_Brief.pdf).

2010-11 CMT/CAPT Science % at/above Proficient	NA	NA	82.4	NA	NA	75.9	81.7
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## 2.B SET AMBITIOUS BUT ACHIEVABLE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (4)** Did the SEA describe the method it will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics, for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups, that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts through one of the three options below?

Option A: Did the SEA set its AMOs so that they increase in annual equal increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the “all students” group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years?

Option B: Did the SEA set its AMOs so that they increase in annual equal increments toward a goal of 100 percent proficiency no later than the end of the 2019–2020 school year?

Option C: Did the SEA describe another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (5)** Are these AMOs similarly ambitious to the AMOs that would result from using Option A or B above? Are these AMOs ambitious but achievable given the State’s existing proficiency rates and any other relevant circumstances in the State? Will these AMOs result in a significant number of children being on track to be college- and career-ready?

### ***Accountability Measures***

Our proposed accountability system includes measures of:

- **Student achievement**, measured by performance on Connecticut’s state tests in reading, mathematics, writing, and science
- **Change in student achievement**, measured by the change in performance on Connecticut’s state tests
- **Student growth**, measured by the vertical scale growth of individual students on Connecticut’s state tests in reading and math
- **College- and career-readiness**, measured by graduation rates
- **Subgroup performance and College and Career Readiness**, measured by subgroup achievement, change in achievement, and growth on Connecticut’s state tests and subgroup graduation rates for high schools
- **School climate**, as measured by student and teacher attendance

We believe that the state has a responsibility to educate the whole student - not just in academics, but also in civics, arts, and fitness. We also believe that school quality cannot be fully captured by test scores. Therefore we will explore incorporating these additional metrics into our accountability system at a later date:

- Proficiency in civics, arts, and fitness; to be incorporated into student achievement
- Participation, performance, and growth on AP and end-of-course exams; to be incorporated into student achievement and growth
- College enrollment and completion and career and college readiness; to be incorporated into college- and career-readiness measure
- Perceptions and experiences of parents and students, as measured by parent and student surveys; to be incorporated into school climate measure

**Note to readers:** As noted above, we would like to ensure that all Connecticut students have access to civics, arts, and fitness. We hope to capture these elements in our future accountability system. Should we incorporate these measures into the School Achievement Matrix? Or should we consider programming in these areas as a separate threshold measure?

The office of the CPO will be responsible for exploring ways to make the accountability measures more robust.

**Table 2B.1: Proposed and Future Accountability Measures**

	<b>Proposed Accountability Measures for Immediate Incorporation</b>	<b>Proposed Accountability Measures for Future Years</b>
<b>Student achievement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connecticut's state tests in reading, mathematics, writing, and science, and subgroup achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proficiency measures for civics, arts, and fitness</li> <li>▪ AP and end-of-course exams</li> </ul>
<b>Change in student achievement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in performance on Connecticut's state tests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proficiency measures for civics, arts, and fitness</li> <li>▪ AP and end-of-course exams</li> </ul>
<b>Student growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ % of students who meet individual growth targets on the vertical scale</li> </ul>	
<b>College- and career-readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Graduation rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ College enrollment and completion</li> </ul>
<b>Subgroup performance and college and career readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Achievement, change in achievement, and growth of subgroups on Connecticut's state tests; Graduation rates of subgroups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ College enrollment and completion of subgroups</li> </ul>
<b>School climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student and teacher attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parent and student surveys</li> </ul>

### ***Accountability Goals***

Our accountability measures will include the following indicators:

- **Student achievement**, measured by a School Performance Index (SPI); calculation explained in following section
- **Change in student achievement, measured by the change in SPI**
- **Student growth**, measured by individual growth on the vertical scale
- **College- and career-readiness**, measured by 4-year high school graduation rate

- **Subgroup performance and college and career readiness**, measured by SPI for each subgroup, change in SPI for each subgroup, growth on the CMT vertical scale, and 4-year high school graduation rate for each subgroup and 1 minus the drop-out rate for students with disabilities
- **School climate**, as measured by student and teacher attendance.

**Table 2B.2: Accountability Measures and Metrics**

	<b>Accountability Measures</b>	<b>Metrics</b>
<b>Student achievement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connecticut's state tests in ELA, mathematics, writing, and science, and subgroup achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School Performance Index (SPI)</li> </ul>
<b>Change in student achievement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in performance on Connecticut's state tests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in SPI</li> </ul>
<b>Student growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Vertical scale growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ % of students who meet individual targets on vertical scales</li> </ul>
<b>College- and career-readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Graduation rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4-year high school graduation rate</li> </ul>
<b>Subgroup performance and college and career readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Achievement, change in achievement, vertical scale growth on Connecticut's state tests; graduation rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SPI for each subgroup</li> <li>▪ Change in SPI for each subgroup</li> <li>▪ % of students who meet individual targets on vertical scales</li> <li>▪ 4-year high school graduation rate for each subgroup and 1 minus the drop-out rate for students with disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>School climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student and teacher attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student and teacher attendance</li> </ul>

### ***School Achievement Matrix***

Each school will receive a composite score on a 100-point scale that indicates progress against their accountability goals. See table 2B.3 for the School Achievement Matrix.



Table 2B.3: School Achievement Matrix

School Report Card										
Indicator	Achievement – Overall				Achievement – Subgroups				Climate	
	Growth*	Performance	Change in Perform	HS Grad*	Growth*	Performance	Change in Perform	HS Grad*	Stud. Att.	Teach. Att.
Weight	45%				45%				10%	
	15	15	15	15	15 5 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed.	15 2 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed.	15 2 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed.	15 5 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed.	5	5
Target	100% of targets	80	1. Below 80: ½ to 80/6 2. Cannot exceed 2	94% (top 20%)	100% of target s	80	1. Below 80: ½ to 80/6 2. Cannot exceed 2	94% (top 20%)	96% (top 20%)	??? (top 20%)
Score	% of 100%	% of 80	1. >tgt, = 1 2. <tgt = % of tgt 3. <0, 0	2011 Top 10% - 1	% of 100%	% of 80	1. >tgt, = 1 2. <tgt = % of tgt 3. <0, 0	2011 Top 10% - 1	'11 Top 10% - 1	'11 Top 10% - 1
				11-20 - .9				11-20 - .9	11-20 - .9	11-20 - .9
				.....				.....	.....	.....
				81-90 - .1				81-90 - .1	81-90 - .1	81-90 - .1
				Btm 10- 0				Btm 10- 0	Btm 10- 0	Btm 10- 0
Questions	Need Data!	Is 80 hard & w/in reach?	Is 2.0 (un) reasonable	*- Is 94% right? *- Do we want growth?	Need Data!	Is 80 hard & w/in reach?	Is 2.0 (un) reasonable	*- Is 94% right? *- Do we want growth?	Is 94% hard & w/in reach?	*- Tgt?

\*Growth only for CMT schools, \*HS Grad only for CAPT

**Note to readers:** Though this model incorporates many of the priorities and principles that one would want to see in a fair and effective measurement model, we are interested in stakeholder feedback regarding the ability to understand this multivariable model and put it into practice.

### 1. The SPI: Measuring Student Achievement at all Levels

The CSDE School Performance Index (SPI) will be used as the baseline measure for every school in the state, and will be a key component in measuring progress over time.

For each subject tested on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)—mathematics, reading, writing, science—Connecticut reports performance for five achievement levels: Below Basic (BB), Basic (B), Proficient (P), Goal (G) and Advanced (A). These achievement levels are well-understood throughout the state.

The SPI is calculated for each subject tested, then the subject-specific SPIs are averaged. The SPI is calculated for each district, school and subgroup based on all tested students. Districts, schools, and subgroups are credited in the following way:

- No points for students that score Below Basic (BB)
- Students that score Basic (B) = .25 points



- Students that score Proficient (P) = .5 points
- Students that score Goal (G) = .75 points
- Students that score Advanced (A) = 1.0 points

The result is an index score ranging from 0 to 100, where 0 would indicate that all students scored in the Below Basic level and 100 would indicate that all students scored at the Advanced level.

**Table 2B.4: Calculating SPI**

	Level	Calculation
Step 1	Subject-specific SPI	$SPI_{\text{Subject}} = (\%BB \times 0.0) + (\%B \times 0.25) + (\%P \times 0.50) + (\%G \times 0.75) + (\%A \times 1.00)$
Step 2	Aggregate School Performance Index	<p>High Schools:  <math>SPI = (SPI_{\text{Mathematics}} + SPI_{\text{Reading}} + SPI_{\text{Writing}} + SPI_{\text{Science}}) / 4</math></p> <p>Elementary/Middle Schools with grades in which Science is tested:  <math>SPI = (SPI_{\text{Mathematics}} \times 0.3) + (SPI_{\text{Reading}} \times 0.3) + (SPI_{\text{Writing}} \times 0.3) + (SPI_{\text{Science}} \times 0.1)</math></p> <p>Elementary/Middle Schools with grades in which Science is NOT tested:  <math>SPI = (SPI_{\text{Mathematics}} + SPI_{\text{Reading}} + SPI_{\text{Writing}}) / 3</math></p>

**Table 2B.5: Calculating DPI**

	Level	Calculation
Step 1	Subject-specific DPI	$DPI_{\text{Subject}} = (\%BB \times 0.0) + (\%B \times 0.25) + (\%P \times 0.50) + (\%G \times 0.75) + (\%A \times 1.00)$
Step 2	Aggregate District Performance Index	<p>High Schools:  <math>DPI = (DPI_{\text{Mathematics}} + DPI_{\text{Reading}} + DPI_{\text{Writing}} + DPI_{\text{Science}}) / 4</math></p> <p>Elementary/Middle Schools:  <math>SPI = (DPI_{\text{Mathematics}} \times 0.3) + (DPI_{\text{Reading}} \times 0.3) + (DPI_{\text{Writing}} \times 0.3) + (DPI_{\text{Science}} \times 0.1)</math></p>

Note that there are two different calculations for elementary and middle schools. In grades 3-8, mathematics, reading and writing are tested in all six grades, while science is tested in only two grades (grades 5 and 8). Therefore, if science is tested in the school, mathematics, reading and writing each weighted at 0.3 and science weighted at 0.1. The weighting is based on the relative number of grades in which each subject is tested so there is a 3:1 ratio in the number of students tested in mathematics, reading and writing compared to science. A relatively small number of schools – 109 schools out of 798 – do not have grade spans that include grades 5 or 8 where science is tested. For these schools, the school SPI is the average of the subject-specific SPIs for mathematics, reading and writing.

Connecticut is committed to an accountability system that considers the performance of all students, including students with disabilities who take Connecticut's modified and alternate assessments. In order to be assessed on the state assessments, students with disabilities must have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that specify these modified or alternate assessments are appropriate. Students who score at the proficient level or above on the modified or alternate assessment will be considered proficient for purposes of the SPI, and the performance of students who score below proficient will be considered Basic in the calculations.

The SPI will be calculated annually to provide a status measure of performance for schools and districts. We will use the SPI to compare changes in performance over time by calculating the difference in SPI values between consecutive years or over a period of several years.

### ***Accountability Goals***

By 2018, each school, district and the state as a whole will achieve the following goals:

1. If SPI in 2011 is below 80, they will reduce – by half – the gap between its 2011 SPI and an SPI of 80 for all students and all subgroups
2. If SPI in 2011 is above 80, they will maintain or improve SPI
3. If SPI in 2011 is less than 65.3, they will improve SPI growth 2.0 points each year (make the maximum annual growth reasonable); this goal is explained in greater detail below.

The Target SPI for all schools is 80. All schools with an SPI higher than 80 will get full credit on their school's report card in this category as long as they maintain their SPI above 80. For schools with SPIs lower than 80, the schools will get credit for their SPI as a percentage of 80. For example, a school with an SPI of 40 will only get half credit in this category – or 12.5 of the possible 25 points.

By choosing an SPI of 80 as the target, Connecticut creates an accountability system that sets student achievement targets slightly above 'Goal' on state assessments. **This target represents a shift towards higher expectations: the NCLB system set student achievement targets at 'Proficient,' which is a lower target on our state assessments.** If we set our target so that, on average, students are Proficient, then the goal SPI would equal 50.

We considered setting the target SPI 75 – which would mean on average, the target for all students statewide would be to perform at 'Goal' level. However we raised the target to 80 SPI after a closer look at the data. Approximately one-quarter of Connecticut schools have an SPI above 75, which indicated that 75 may not be sufficiently ambitious. We believe an ambitious target of SPI 80 is more consistent with Connecticut's goal that all students are college and career ready.

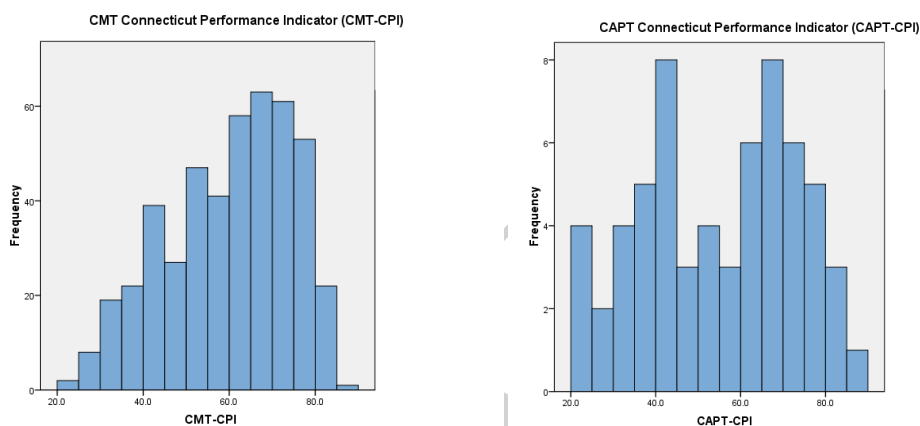
Scoring at or above Goal is a challenging, yet reasonable, expectation for Connecticut students. 'Goal' requires students to demonstrate extensive knowledge of grade-level content. In mathematics, for example, CMT students demonstrate well-developed conceptual understanding, computational skills and problem-solving skills, as well as an ability to solve complex and abstract mathematical problems. For Reading, CMT students scoring at 'Goal' are likely to demonstrate consistent ability to read and respond to grade-appropriate literary and informational texts with minimal assistance. Students at this level will also consistently use effective strategies before, during, and after reading to understand, interpret, and evaluate grade-appropriate text.

Furthermore, an independent study of Connecticut's assessments confirm that students that score 'Goal' on high school state tests (CAPT) are more likely to be college- and career-ready, as measured by SAT performance, remedial course-taking patterns in college, college GPA, and postsecondary degree attainment. A second study found that a student's performance on the Grade 8 state test (CMT) in each discipline highly correlates with Grade 10 CAPT performance. Setting the target at 'Goal' standard at all grade levels represents a more ambitious and appropriate target for

Connecticut's students since an SPI of 80 ensures more students in the school have met the 'Goal' standard.<sup>2</sup>

For the 2010-11 school year, the statewide SPI – or the Connecticut Performance Indicator – was 65.8 for the CMT and 62.5 for the CAPT. Statewide, an increase of one point on the SPI between two consecutive school years represents a net gain of approximately 2,400 students increasing their performance by one level across the four disciplines. The histograms below summarize the statewide SPI distribution in 2010-2011 (**Table 2B.6**).

**Table 2B.6: Distribution of School SPI Performance in 2010-2011**



## 2. Change in SPI: Measuring Change in Performance at all Levels

The SPI can also be used to compare changes in performance over time by calculating the difference in SPI values between consecutive years or over a period of several years. The state will use a school's average SPI score from the previous three years (ending in 2010-11) to establish the baseline. **This measure gives schools credit for moving students across any of four thresholds: from Below Basic to Basic, Basic to Proficient, Proficient to Goal, or from Goal to Advanced.** The change in SPI allows us to see a more complete picture of how a school has moved its students across all proficiency levels. The change in SPI avoids creating the inappropriate incentive to focus only on students who are on the cusp of proficiency, and creates the more appropriate incentive to focus on students at all levels.

We will calculate the required annual change in SPI by finding the difference between the current SPI and the goal SPI of 80, and requiring enough growth each year so that if the school makes adequate progress, it will increase its SPI halfway to 80 by 2018.

Our analysis of historical school growth shows that 80 percent of all schools from the previous three years do not achieve average annual growth greater than 2 points on the SPI. Therefore in order to make our state's growth goals achievable for all schools, we have set the maximum achievable growth at 2 points on the SPI.

<sup>2</sup> *First Steps: An Evaluation of the Success of Connecticut Students Beyond High School* (Coelen & Berger, 2006) and *Next Steps: Preparing a Quality Workforce* (Coelen, Rende, & Fulton, 2008).

For the 2010-11 school year, the statewide SPI – or the Connecticut Performance Indicator – was 65.8 for the CMT and 62.5 for the CAPT. To make adequate growth – to reach halfway to 80 in six years –the state SPI would have to grow an average of 1.23 SPI on the CMT and 1.46 on the CAPT over the next 6 years. This target represents an achievable goal as the aggregate growth our state does not exceed the maximum achievable growth of 2 SPI points per year.

School calculation scenarios include:

- If a school's current SPI is 80, then it has already reached the target, so it receives full credit for change in SPI as long as it maintains an SPI over 80.
- If a school's current SPI for "all students" is 68, then the ultimate goal is to increase that number to 80. By 2018, the school's goal is to move halfway to that target. This school will need to be on track to reach an SPI of 74 (a 6 point increase) by 2018. Over 6 years, this means the school's "all students" group must show a change of about 1 point on the SPI each year to receive full credit for this category.
- Schools with a 2011 SPI that is less than 65.3 would need to experience change their SPI more than 2 points. However, because we set the maximum achievable change rate at 2 SPI points, the target for change in SPI for schools with a 2011 SPI less than 65.3 is set at 2 SPI points. To receive full credit in this category, this school would need to increase its SPI by 2 points.
- If a school does not meet its target, it receives partial credit for the increase it does make (as a percentage of the target change. If a school's target change in SPI is 2, then it will receive half credit, or 12.5 points if it increases its SPI by 1. If it does not increase its SPI or its SPI decreases, then the school receives a 0 in this category.

### **3. Vertical Scale Growth: Measuring Individual Student Growth**

Connecticut will use the vertical scale at the elementary and middle school level to measure the progress schools have made in ensuring that students experience sufficient growth to ensure they are on track to reach the Proficient or Goal standard within three years. Each school will be assigned a growth success rate, which combines the percentage of students who (1) score below proficient, but experience sufficient growth such that they track to achieve "Proficient" within three years, (2) score Proficient and experience sufficient growth such that they track to achieve "Goal" within three years, and (3) score Goal or Advanced.

Connecticut's vertical scales were developed to measure change in student performance across grades. A vertical scale can be used to interpret growth for individual students, schools or school districts and for various subgroups (e.g., ethnicity, lunch status, special education). Connecticut's vertical scales were developed through a linking study in 2007, and are available for the CMT mathematics and reading tests for grades 3-8.

Growth for individual students from one year to another year is defined as: [Vertical Scale Score Year 2] minus [Vertical Scale Score Year 1]. Growth for groups of students from one year to another year is defined as: [Mean Vertical Scale Score Year 2] minus [Mean Vertical Scale Score Year 1]. The CSDE has not identified expected growth on the vertical scale.

Vertical scales are not available for the CAPT because it is a single grade-level test. Additionally, there is not a vertical scale that relates CMT performance to CAPT performance.

### **4. The Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rate**

We have set a target graduation rate of 94 percent, which is the graduation rate for the top 20 percentile of schools in Connecticut. Schools with a graduation rate of 94 percent get full credit in this category. Schools with a graduation rate of 50 or lower get zero credit for this category. Schools with a graduation rate between 50 and 94 receive increasing credit for higher graduation rates. Schools will receive credit on a linear point scale, scoring between 0 and 15, where a graduation rate of 50% or lower will score 0 and a graduation rate of 94% or better will score the maximum 15 points.

Starting with the graduating class of 2010, the Department was able to track an individual cohort of students from the students' initial entrance into 9th grade until they exited public schools or graduated from high school, using student-level data from the state's public school information system. This new methodology is based on the NCLB/ESEA four-year Cohort Graduation Rate calculation rules. This methodology is more accurate than the previous methods used for calculating the school, district and state graduation rates and provides a uniform system across states for tracking and comparing student graduation rates.

The data indicates that for the 2010 cohort, 81.8 percent graduated in four years, 6.1 percent are still enrolled in high school, and 0.4 percent are non-completers who received a Certificate of Attendance. Additionally 11.7 percent of the 2010 cohort did not graduate, were not still enrolled, or did not receive a Certificate of Attendance. This group of students represents the state's drop-out population.

The graduation data reveals clear differences in subgroup four-year graduation rates (**Table 2B.7**). The graduation rate for females (85.4 percent) exceeds that for males (78.5 percent) by nearly seven percentage points. Graduation rates for black (68.7 percent) and Hispanic (64.0 percent) are far lower than those for white (88.7 percent) and Asian (88.8 percent) students. Economically disadvantaged students (62.7 percent) graduate at substantially lower rates than their more advantaged counterparts (88.4 percent). Similar patterns hold when we compare English language learners (60.1 percent) to students whose primary language is English (82.7 percent) and students with disabilities (62.5 percent) to their non-disabled peers (84.3 percent).

**Table 2B.6: Connecticut 2010 Cohort Graduation Rates**

		Graduates	Non-Graduates		
Category	2010 Cohort #	4-Year Graduation Rate	Still Enrolled	Non-Completers (Certificate Of Attendance)	Drop-out
All Students	44,461	81.8	6.1	0.4	11.7
Hispanic	6,917	64.0	11.4	0.5	24.1
Non-Hispanic	37,544	85.2	5.1	0.4	9.3
Indian	146	72.9	6.9	0.0	20.2
Asian	1,562	88.8	3.3	0.1	7.8

		Graduates	Non-Graduates		
Category	2010 Cohort #	4-Year Graduation Rate	Still Enrolled	Non-Completers (Certificate Of Attendance)	Drop-out
Black	6,431	68.7	10.5	1.2	19.6
White	29,405	88.7	4.0	0.2	7.1
Male	22,835	78.5	7.9	0.7	12.9
Female	21,626	85.4	4.1	0.1	10.4
ELL	1,938	60.1	11.0	0.0	28.9
Non-ELL	42,523	82.7	5.8	0.4	11.1
Eligible For Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	11,368	62.7	12.0	1.3	24.0
Not Eligible For Lunch	33,093	88.4	4.0	0.1	7.5
Special Education	5,091	62.5	21.3	0.8	15.4
Non-Special Education	39,370	84.3	4.0	0.4	11.3

Connecticut proposes to use graduation rate in 2011 as one of its indicators for initially classifying its lowest performing high schools, which have rates at or below 60 percent. We will use two indicators for subsequent AMOs. For all students and subgroups except students with disabilities, we will use the simple cohort graduation rate. For the students with disabilities subgroup we will use (1 – drop-out rate).

We propose using ‘1 – drop-out rate’ for the students with disabilities subgroup because in Connecticut, approximately 22 percent of all students with disabilities, ages 18 through 21, remain enrolled in public education even though they have completed the outlined course of study for receipt of a regular high school diploma within four years. These students continue their public school enrollment based on the decision of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team in order to receive the transitional services necessary to assist them in moving on to college or the workforce. Using the four-year graduation rate for this subgroup would penalize schools that are appropriately providing educational programming for those students who need more time to prepare for their post-secondary life.

## 5. Subgroup Performance

The performance of subgroups can make up to 25 percent of a school’s report card score depending on the subgroups present. Connecticut has chosen to focus on the five subgroups that have historically underperformed in our state as compared to the “all students” group: Black, Hispanic, English Language Learners, Low Income Students, and Students with Disabilities. Connecticut will

continue to monitor other the performance of other subgroups and will incorporate them into the subgroup performance section if they begin to underperform.

Subgroup Performance will have four major factors: SPI, Change in SPI, Vertical Scale Growth, and High School Graduation Rate. Each of the five subgroups will be measured using each factor. The subgroups will be measured in these three areas similar to the calculation of the aggregate measures described previously. However, each subgroup's target will be determined using the 2011 performance of that subgroup as a baseline.

For example, to calculate the Change in SPI target to reach halfway to 80 SPI:

- If a Subgroup A had an SPI of 60 in 2011, subgroup performance would need to grow an average of 1.7 points annually to reach its target of 70 SPI by 2018.
- If Subgroup B had an SPI of 50 in 2011, then the maximum achievable growth of 2 points per year would govern, and the subgroup performance would need to grow an average of 2 points annually to reach its target of 62 SPI by 2018.

A single school, then, will likely have different change in SPI targets for different subgroups – meeting subgroup AMOs will require that the school make the most progress for the subgroups with the lowest performance.

## **6. School Climate**

Connecticut will measure school climate by including student and teacher attendance in a school's report card score. Schools will get full credit for 96 percent attendance and no credit for 70 percent attendance. Schools with graduation rates between 70 and 96 percent will receive partial credit on a linear point scale for student attendance. As previously stated, Connecticut will explore adding more robust measures of school climate in the future.

## **School Classification System**

Connecticut will classify schools into five categories based on the three-year average of their School Achievement Matrix scores: Excelling, Emerging, Transition, Review, and Priority. Precise report card score thresholds for these categories are pending further data analysis.

## **District Goals and Accountability**

The district goals and measures of success will be aligned with the school goals and measures of success. If all the schools in a district meet their annual measurable objectives, the district will meet its objectives as well.

We will calculate the District Performance Index for CMT and CAPT subjects separately, using same formula as SPI. Subject DPIs are combined with weighting that reflects the number of grade levels tested (i.e., science weighted less than reading because only tested in two grades). We will calculate the District Annual Measurable Objectives by calculating change in SPI targets from previous three years with goal of getting halfway to 80 by 2018. We will calculate graduation and attendance targets in a similar manner. District Report Cards will mirror School Achievement Matrices. However they will include the SPI for both CAPT and CMT.



## District Report Card

Indicator	Achievement – Overall				Achievement – Subgroups				Climate	
	Growth	Performance	Change in Perform	HS Grad <sup>+</sup>	Growth	Performance	Change in Perform	HS Grad <sup>+</sup>	Stud. Att.	Teach. Att.
Weight	45%				45%				10%	
	Elem: 15 HS: n/a	Elem: 15 HS: 15	Elem: 15 HS: 15	Elem: n/a HS: 15	15 5 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed.	15 2 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed.	15 2 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed.	15 5 per SG •Black •Hispanic •ELL •Low-Inc •Sp. Ed. <sup>#</sup>	5	5
Target	TBD	80	1. Below 80: ½ to 80/6 yrs 2. Cannot exceed 2	95%	100% of target s	80	1. Below 80: ½ to 80/6 2. Cannot exceed 2	95%	96%	Average absence <6.2 days
Score	TBD	2011 Top 10% - 1	2011 Top 10% - 1	2011 Top 10% - 1	% of 100%	% of 80	1. >tgt, = 1 2. <tgt = % of tgt 3. <0, 0	2011 Top 10% - 1	2011 Top 10% - 1	2011 Top 10% - 1
		11-20: .9	11-20: .9	11-20: .9				11-20: .9	11-20: .9	11-20: .9
		.....	.....	.....				.....	.....	.....
		81-90: .1	81-90: .1	81-90: .1				81-90: .1	81-90: .1	81-90: .1
		Btm 10: 0	Btm 10: 0	Btm 10: 0				Btm 10: 0	Btm 10: 0	Btm 10: 0

<sup>+</sup>HS Graduation rates only for high schools. Calculated using the 4-year cohort graduation rate, unless otherwise noted

<sup>#</sup> Calculated in relation to the dropout rate to account for students with disabilities who spend longer than 4 years in high school.

## 2.C REWARD SCHOOLS

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (6)** Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying highest performing and high-progress schools as Reward Schools? Did the SEA's request identify both highest-performing and high-progress schools as part of its first set of identified Reward Schools? Did the SEA describe how the SEA will publicly recognize and, if possible, reward highest-performing and high-progress schools?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (7)** Has the SEA provided a reasonable explanation of why its proposed recognition and, where applicable, rewards are likely to be considered meaningful by schools? For example, has the SEA consulted with LEAs and schools in designing its recognition and, where applicable, rewards?

### Recognition and Reward Program

In order to recognize both outstanding performance and progress, Connecticut will recognize schools that achieve the strongest performance and the greatest growth with traditionally underperforming subgroups including historically underperforming racial and ethnic minorities, low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

### Annual Recognition

The SDE will recognize the Title I or Title I eligible schools with the highest-performing and highest progress subgroups (as measured by the subgroup performance category of the School Achievement Matrix – incorporating subgroup performance on the SPI, change in SPI, success in meeting individual growth targets, and high school graduation rates).

The CSDE will celebrate each Reward School with a visit from the Governor and Commissioner of Education and a press release describing the school's accomplishments. The CSDE may also give the school flexibility from certain state requirements, especially in cases where the school can demonstrate that the current regulations prevent the school from making innovative changes that would better serve its students.

### **Distinction for Sustained Progress**

The CSDE will award grants to schools that have demonstrated the greatest sustained performance and growth for three years. Specifically, the CSDE plans to award the top 10 schools with \$250,000 grants and an additional 20 schools with \$50,000 grants. Schools can elect to use grants to drive student achievement or increase enrichment opportunities for students and they are coupled with the responsibility to participate in a partnership with low-performing schools to share and promote effective practices.

Additionally, teachers and principals at each of these schools have the option to nominate a strong staff member to take a yearlong sabbatical. During this year, the chosen educator would be deployed by the State Turnaround Office to share effective practices with other schools in the Commissioner's Network (described in later sections). These awards may be funded with repurposed state funds or with a portion of the state's increase in federal Title I, Part A (authorized by ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A)). The CSDE may decide to increase the frequency of the grants if funding resources permit.

The CSDE consulted with stakeholders to determine the most meaningful recognition and rewards for schools, and this feedback helped with the design of the program. Originally, we had anticipated providing a conference to highlight best practices in these schools, but feedback we received led us to the creation of the partnership with Focus and Priority Schools. Other feedback indicated that groups believed that money given to the Reward Schools should be used at the discretion of the schools and not for a specific state required initiative.

## **2.D PRIORITY SCHOOLS**

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (8)** Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State's Title I schools as Priority Schools?

Does the SEA's request include a list of its Priority Schools? Did the SEA identify a number of Priority Schools equal to at least five percent of its Title I schools? Did the SEA's methodology result in the identification of Priority Schools that are:

- (i) among the lowest five percent of Title I schools in the State based on the achievement of the "all students" group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, combined, and have demonstrated a lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the "all students" group;
- (ii) Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years; or
- (iii) Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program that are using SIG funds to fully implement a school intervention model?

Has the SEA indicated that it will ensure that each of its Priority Schools implements the selected intervention for at least three years?
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### **Identifying Priority Schools**

Priority Schools will be chosen because their School Achievement Matrix score falls below a certain threshold. Additionally, any Title I or Title I eligible high school with a graduation rate lower than 60 percent will be included as a Priority School. This label will be re-evaluated every three years based on the progress the school makes as measured by the change in Schools' Report Card scores.

### **The Commissioner's Network**

The CSDE will ensure that Priority Schools receive necessary interventions or supports in one of three ways:

1. Continued School Improvement Grant Interventions
2. Commissioner's Network Interventions – District Administered
3. Commissioner's Network Interventions – Network Administered

In order to address the challenges faced by our chronically low-performing schools and districts, the CSDE in partnership with the Governor's office will create the Commissioner's Network. The Commissioner's Network will represent the combined efforts of the State and the community, and will focus on enhancing teacher supports while reducing bureaucratic obstacles. The Commissioner's Network is a system of state supports and interventions designed to improve chronically low-performing schools. The Network will serve as a vehicle for innovative initiatives, a platform for the sharing of best practices, and a model for other schools and districts throughout the state.

Schools will be selected for the Commissioner's Network based on low student achievement and lack of progress (as measured by School Achievement Matrices). However, schools with mitigating circumstances – including schools designed to serve special student populations and schools currently in the midst of intensive interventions – will be given special consideration before being selected for the Network. Because the state is currently overseeing intensive interventions in School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools, the state will refrain from mandating additional interventions in these schools until the turnaround phase is complete. At that point, the SIG schools will be re-evaluated. Any SIG school that still falls below the Priority Schools Report Card threshold will then become eligible for the Commissioner's Network.

The State Department of Education's Turnaround Team will lead the design and administration of intervention and support strategies in the Commissioner's Network. This office will seek out best practices from within the state and across the country and will work to promote high-quality school models in the Commissioner's Network.

Approximately \$24.8 million in new turnaround funding provided by legislative appropriation will support the Commissioner's Network (pending legislative approval in the upcoming session). The additional funding will provide each school with one-time start-up costs and will provide the school's educators with additional training, resources, and increased compensation. The Commissioner's Network will transform up to 25 schools over the next two years. A subset of these schools will join the Network this fall; additional schools will join the Network as the Turnaround office builds its capacity to intervene in more schools in later years.

The Commissioner's Network provides the capacity for two levels of state intervention: State-administered Network Schools and District-administered Network Schools. The governing body of the Commissioner's Network schools – either local or state – will control the school budget, including all federal, state, and local funds.

We will consider several factors when determining how struggling schools should be governed during their turnaround phase, including home districts' overall capacity, track record for improvement, and the number of low-performing schools in the district. In some cases, home districts will lead the turnaround efforts in partnership with the State's Turnaround Team. These schools may retain district governance, with the CSDE providing resources, flexibility, and support for turnaround strategies spelled out in agreements with the local district. For schools whose home districts are experiencing lagging performance or lower capacity, among other factors, the CSDE may exercise authority to serve as a temporary trustee and administer turnaround strategies directly. The goal will be to lift the performance of these schools and return them to local district governance within a few years.

Diverse entities will operate Network schools, and may include universities, Regional Educational Service Centers, non-profits, charter management organizations, CommPACT, and other providers or partners with proven track records of success. All operators will enter into management agreements with the School Turnaround Office that, among other features, specify student achievement and retention goals and terms and may phase in the turnaround's implementation over time. In some cases, the Commissioner's Network may phase in interventions in Priority Schools, beginning with a single or a few grade levels and expanding over time to transform the entire school.

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (9)** Are the interventions that the SEA described aligned with the turnaround principles and are they likely to result in dramatic, systemic change in Priority Schools? Do the SEA's interventions include all of the following?

- (i) providing strong leadership by: (1) reviewing the performance of the current principal; (2) either replacing the principal if such a change is necessary to ensure strong and effective leadership, or demonstrating to the SEA that the current principal has a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort; and (3) providing the principal with operational flexibility in the areas of scheduling, staff, curriculum, and budget;
- (ii) ensuring that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction by: (1) reviewing the quality of all staff and retaining only those who are determined to be effective and have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort; (2) preventing ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; and (3) providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs;
- (iii) redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration;
- (iv) strengthening the school's instructional program based on student needs and ensuring that the instructional program is research-based, rigorous, and aligned with State academic content standards;
- (v) using data to inform instruction and for continuous improvement, including by providing time for collaboration on the use of data;
- (vi) establishing a school environment that improves school safety and discipline and addressing other non-academic factors that impact student achievement, such as students' social, emotional, and health needs; and

- (vii) providing ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (10)** Has the SEA identified practices to be implemented that meet the turnaround principles and are likely to —

- (i) increase the quality of instruction in Priority Schools;
- (ii) improve the effectiveness of the leadership and the teaching in these schools; and
- (iii) improve student achievement and, where applicable, graduation rates for all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and the lowest-achieving students?

### **Interventions in School Improvement Grant Schools**

The Turnaround Office will continue SIG interventions in the 19 schools that have been identified as SIG-schools. These interventions are consistent with the turnaround principles outlined in the flexibility guidance.

A CSDE staff member works closely with SIG school staff to address implementation issues, support data teams, conduct walk-throughs, and engage in problem solving with leaders. The CSDE has developed a monitoring procedure with separate monitoring guides for Restart, Turnaround, and Transformation models. The CSDE staff uses the monitoring tool to identify needs and leverage resources to help schools. During the onsite monthly monitoring meetings, the CSDE staff ensures that SIG schools have embedded professional development, common planning time for collaboration, use of data to drive decision-making, effective instructional practices, and a sense of urgency.

Furthermore, the CSDE's technical assistance to SIG schools includes district involvement. The CSDE staff plays a critical role in acting as an intermediary between schools and districts. Districts are required to give SIG schools authority for budgeting and staffing. Our schools experience the greatest challenge in making prioritized, strategic choices and in sustaining reform efforts. We address this challenge through the monthly monitoring and meetings of the SIG External Advisory Council, which brings together districts, schools, and consultants to solve problems and share best practices.

### **Interventions in Commissioner's Network Schools**

Lessons learned from SIG schools will, in part, guide our planning and work with the Priority Schools in the Commissioner's Network. The Chief Turnaround Officer and Team will lead the turnaround effort in the Commissioner's Network Schools – including both District administered schools and State Administered schools – and will require the following reform efforts:

1. **Diagnosis.** The CSDE – in partnership with school leadership teams – will conduct a needs assessment at the school in order to determine areas of strength and challenge. After consulting with stakeholders, including parents and members of the community, we will customize an intervention design. The goal of the needs analysis and intervention design is to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to school reform and instead provide differentiated support based on school needs and grade level.
2. **Strong Leadership.** The Turnaround Team will then evaluate the current leadership and replace the principal if necessary. The turnaround principal will have sufficient operational flexibility – including staffing, school calendar, budgeting, and general operations – to implement



fully a comprehensive approach in order to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates. The CSDE will also screen and assist in the selection of providers and partners for select schools. A critical component of their work will be to recruit and develop turnaround leaders.

3. **Effective Teachers.** A key component of the Commissioner's Network will be a platform of transformative talent policies. Commissioner's Network schools will innovate in the area of compensation to attract, retain, support and advance the most talented teachers and leaders – professionals who can help create a new achievement-focused culture in their schools. These schools will offer increased compensation to attract talented professionals and will make staffing changes with a mutual consent approach. Teachers who are currently employed at these schools may reapply for their position in the school; otherwise, they may request a new assignment in the district based on their qualifications, skills, and expertise. Regarding staffing at Network schools, priority will be given to teachers who work within the school's home district.

Network schools will evaluate teachers and leaders using the new state evaluation guidelines, which include indicators of student achievement. The Commissioner's Network Schools will also pilot a teacher career ladder linked to the new evaluation framework with the hope that it can be a model for other schools and districts throughout the state. The new system will have more opportunities for promotion and career growth and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the turnaround school. After ample opportunities have been provided for teachers and leaders to improve their professional practice, the schools may identify and separate from service teachers and leaders who have not improved their performance sufficiently.

4. **Additional Time for Student Learning and Teacher Collaboration** The CSDE believes that all students must be held to high standards. We recognize that some students will need more learning time to achieve these high standards. The traditional 186-day school calendar limits opportunities for students to achieve. Network schools may extend the school day and year to provide more time for learning. We will ensure that this additional time leads to improvements in student achievement by providing more time for core academic pursuits with opportunities for individualized support; teacher collaboration to strengthen instruction; and high quality enrichment.

Priority Schools may incorporate the following best practices:

- Extend the school day to allocate more time in core academic classes and to allow teachers to provide differentiated instruction based on student needs;
- Implement alternative schedules that have been proven effective and/or re-allocate existing time at all grade levels
- Extend the school year for students in order to provide added opportunities to explore subject matter in more depth, to engage in project-based learning activities, or to offer a broader range of instructional programs and enrichment activities
- Implement a plan to monitor and address absenteeism to ensure that all students are attending school and have opportunities to access learning
- Provide after-school, Saturday-school, vacation, and summer programs that offer students an opportunity to extend traditional, school-based learning beyond the school

day (or week or year) and to explore new, less traditional areas of learning in conjunction with 21st Century Learning Programs or independently

- Allocate time for teacher planning, professional development and collaboration.

- 5. Strengthening the School's Instructional Program.** After diagnosing school needs, ensuring that the most effective teachers and leaders are in place and supported at the school, and ensuring optimal conditions for the school day, we will then examine the school instructional program to determine that it is rigorous, research-based, based on student needs, and aligned to the CCSS. Furthermore, select Commissioner's Network schools may pilot personalized, technology-based student learning systems that enable teachers to supplement, reinforce and customize learning. Staff at Commissioner's Network schools will receive ongoing, high-quality job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and the CCSS.

During the current legislative session, the Governor in partnership with the CSDE has proposed revisions to the current professional development system, including replacing current professional development requirements with evaluation-based professional development and support; requiring training for evaluators; and authorizing the State Board to withhold state funds from districts that fail to provide professional development and support. Furthermore, each local and regional board of education shall make available, annually, at no cost to its certified employees, at least 18 hours of professional development; no more than six hours may be provided in large-group settings.

The proposed revision defines professional development as a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement that fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance. Professional development must be comprised of professional learning that (1) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards, (2) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by principals, coaches, mentors, master teachers or other lead teachers and occurs frequently on an individual basis or among groups of teachers in a job-embedded process of continuous improvement. Professional development opportunities must provide meaningful support and opportunities for improved practice based on general findings from teacher evaluations. The CSDE will conduct reviews of the professional development and support programs provided by local boards of education.

- 6. Using Data to Inform Instruction and for Continuous Improvement.** A critical goal of the Commissioner's Network is to embed a culture of data within all schools – to use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based, vertically aligned between grades, and aligned with the CCSS. Leaders and teachers will be responsible for promoting the continuous use of student data – including formative, interim and summative assessments – to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students. The reconfigured school day will provide time for teachers to collaborate to make data-driven instructional decisions.
- 7. School Environment.** We know student learning cannot take place absent a safe school environment. All Commissioner's Network schools will establish school environments that improve school safety and discipline and addresses other non-academic factors that impact



student achievement. The Connecticut legislature recently recognized the importance of safe school climate when it passed PA 11-232. This act requires that all Connecticut schools create a safe school climate plan, appoint a safe schools climate specialist, and administer a biannual school climate survey. In adherence with these statutory requirements, Commissioner's Network schools will use these tools to build and maintain a positive and safe school culture. Additionally, we will provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students in identified schools.

- 8. Ongoing Mechanisms for Family and Community Engagement.** The Commissioner's Network is grounded in an understanding that schools cannot succeed without the full support of families and the community. We believe that a unified focus on academics, services, supports, and opportunities leads to improved student learning, behavior and attendance, family involvement, and community engagement with public schools. The Commissioner's Network will work with families and the community to effect system-wide change to ensure that low performance is no longer tolerated.

Identified Network schools will establish or strengthen wraparound services for students, with the goal providing community school services including health and social services as well as referrals to such services from the school site. To accomplish this goal, Commissioner's Network schools will employ a "lead agency" approach. The Network will employ community partnership coordinators, who are responsible for identifying service needs and gaps within the schools, developing plans for meeting those needs, making connections between the schools and community partners to provide needed services, and communicating internally and externally to ensure effective implementation. These coordinators will also work with community partners to ensure the long-term sustainability of the services through resource development and by collecting and analyzing data for continuous program improvement.

The coordinators will leverage community involvement to provide students with a wide range of supports and opportunities, including family engagement, parent leadership and adult education; extended learning opportunities and youth development; physical, dental and mental health programs, and social services; and early childhood development.

Connecticut remains committed to creating welcoming schools as school invitingness has been shown to be the most consistent predictor of parent involvement.<sup>1</sup> Commissioner's Network schools will also continue incorporate the body of knowledge gleaned from School Governance Councils and School-Parent Compacts.

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (11)** Is the SEA's proposed timeline for ensuring that LEAs that have one or more Priority Schools implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each priority school no later than the 2014-2015 school year reasonable and likely to result in implementation of the interventions in these schools?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (12)** Does the SEA's proposed timeline distribute Priority Schools' implementation of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in a balanced way, such that there is not a concentration of these schools in the later years of the timeline?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (13)** Did the SEA provide criteria to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits priority status? Do the SEA's criteria

ensure that schools that exit priority status have made significant progress in improving student achievement? Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit priority status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?

### **Timeline for Interventions in Priority Schools (subject to change)**

Interventions in Priority Schools will begin spring 2012 and continue through the end of school year 2014-2015.

**Table 2.D1**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
Identify Priority Schools; Determine whether governed by district or state	June 2012
Conduct needs assessment	June 2012
Plan for implementation of reform models; Consult with stakeholders	June 2012
Select turnaround models and partners; Begin to make staffing decisions	July 2012
Train staff	Aug. 2012
Implement Turnaround strategy	Sept. 2012
Continuous evaluation and improvement	Ongoing
Re-evaluate inclusion in Commissioner's Network	June 2015

### **Exit Criteria for Priority Schools**

Both SIG and Commissioner's Network schools exit Priority Status if they demonstrate sustained improvement as defined as making their SPI, individual growth, graduation rate, and student attendance targets for three consecutive years.

The CSDE will evaluate all SIG Schools at the end of their three years based on the implementation of the reform model and the progress made in increasing student achievement. Schools that fail to make sufficient progress after the three years will undergo additional interventions and may be added to the Commissioner's Network.

Once Commissioner's Network schools achieve exit status, steps will be taken to return their full governance to the host district; some autonomy and other features may remain.

## **2.E FOCUS SCHOOLS**

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (14)** Did the SEA describe its methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State's Title I schools as Focus Schools?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (15)** Did the SEA identify a number of Focus Schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State's Title I schools? In identifying Focus Schools, was the SEA's methodology based on the achievement and lack of progress over a number of years of one or more subgroups of students identified under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system or, at the high school level, graduation rates for one or more subgroups?

Did the SEA's methodology result in the identification of Focus Schools that have —

- (i) the largest within-school gaps between the highest-achieving subgroup or subgroups and the lowest-achieving subgroup or subgroups or, at the high school level, the largest within-school gaps in the graduation rate; or
- (ii) a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement or, at the high school level, a low graduation rate?

Did the SEA identify as Focus Schools all Title I-participating high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years that are not identified as Priority Schools?

### Identifying Focus Schools

Connecticut's commitment to closing the state achievement gap is not limited to the lowest-performing schools. Rather, we will remain within the spirit of NCLB by continuing to identify and support interventions in all schools that are contributing to our achievement gap.

The CSDE will identify Focus Schools as those schools that have a School Achievement Matrix score below a certain threshold for a 'High-Needs Subgroup' comprised of English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Free- and Reduced-price lunch students. These schools will be the non-Priority Schools with the lowest performing "high needs" subgroup larger than 20 students.

Connecticut is committed to closing racial and ethnic achievement gaps, so to ensure that the High-Needs Subgroup does not mask racial and ethnic achievement gaps, we will then reexamine the data to identify the lowest performing racial and ethnic subgroups with greater than 20 students. If this data analysis identifies any additional schools below the established threshold, we will include them as Focus Schools.

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (16)** Did the SEA describe the process and timeline it will use to ensure that each LEA identifies the needs of its Focus Schools and their students and provide examples of and justifications for the interventions the SEA will require its Focus Schools to implement to improve the performance of students who are furthest behind?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (17)** Has the SEA demonstrated that the interventions it has identified are effective at increasing student achievement in schools with similar characteristics, needs, and challenges as the schools the SEA has identified as Focus Schools?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (18)** Has the SEA identified interventions that are appropriate for different levels of schools (elementary, middle, high) and that address different types of school needs (e.g., all-students, targeted at the lowest-achieving students)?

### District-Led Intervention

Districts will be directly responsible for taking appropriate intervention measures to improve student performance in Focus Schools. To provide support and hold districts accountable, Connecticut is establishing State Turnaround and Performance Offices whose mandates include ensuring that districts have the information, capacity, and resources they need to intervene effectively in the Focus Schools within their jurisdictions (more detail in Section 2G). The Turnaround Team will work closely with the Performance Team to provide schools and districts with school performance data (School Achievement Matrices) and detailed information that delineates schools' areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. This increased transparency will provide districts with the

information they will need to target interventions and support to meet the particular needs of their Focus Schools.

### **Differentiated Interventions by Subgroups**

In order to ensure that district interventions meet the needs of the low performing subgroups in Focus Schools, CSDE will ensure that districts use data disaggregated by subgroup to tailor interventions in these schools. Because Focus Schools will likely vary significantly in their aggregate performance, these differentiated interventions are crucial.

Districts with schools identified as Focus Schools will be required to submit strategic school intervention plans to the Turnaround Office, which will review the districts' plans and monitor their fidelity to those plans. Districts will be required to tailor their proposed interventions to meet the needs of Focus Schools and to implement best practices with proven track records in addressing the identified problems. Districts may propose targeted strategies such as requiring that schools support struggling subgroups by a) partnering with external organizations; b) working with executive coaches who have experience leading schools with similar subgroups or with data team facilitators who can work with school and grade level teams to improve their use of student-data in decision-making; c) ensuring staff receive Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) training (more detail below) related to ELL strategies; or d) participating in focus monitoring and receiving technical assistance from the Office of Special Education at the CSDE.

### **Differentiated Interventions appropriate for Elementary, Middle and High Schools**

Recognizing the need to differentiate interventions by grade level, the Turnaround Team will also ensure that District strategic plans include interventions that are age-appropriate and likely to be successful with the target population. To do this, the CSDE will build on its experience working with School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools. Through work with the SIG schools, the CSDE has found that effective interventions at the high school level include smaller learning communities, school climate specialists, remedial reading interventions, extended learning time, drop-out prevention and credit recovery, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training. Effective interventions at the elementary and middle school level include extended learning time, tiered intervention, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Districts may choose to require Focus Schools to implement similar age-appropriate and effective interventions if the School Achievement Matrix and performance report demonstrate particular needs in these areas. Rather than prescribing a particular one-size-fits-all intervention, the Turnaround Office will instead work to ensure districts are planning for and measuring the success of interventions that are rooted in the particular needs of the school.

### **State Support and Funding for Focus Schools**

Districts will be required to use up to 20% of Title I funds to intervene in and support the Focus Schools (amount set aside will depend on the number of Focus Schools in their district and the level of intervention required); federal School Improvement Grant, Part A funds will also be used to support these schools if necessary.

### **Timeline for Interventions (subject to change)**

Interventions in Focus Schools will begin in Fall 2013 and continue through the end of school year 2014-2015.

Milestone	Date
CSDE publishes list of Focus Schools	June 2012
CSDE establishes Turnaround and Performance Offices	August 2012
Performance Team provides all schools with report cards and performance reports	August 2012
CSDE develops criteria for district strategic plans	September 2012
Districts develop strategic accountability and intervention plans for all struggling schools including Focus Schools	Aug. 2012 – Dec. 2012
State reviews district accountability and intervention plans	Jan. 2012 – Feb. 2012
Districts conduct needs assessments in all struggling schools including Focus Schools	Mar. 2012 – May. 2012
Districts begin to implement interventions	Aug. 2013
CSDE monitors districts to ensure fidelity to plans	Ongoing

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (19)** Did the SEA provide criteria to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits focus status? Do the SEA's criteria ensure that schools that exit focus status have made significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps? Is the level of progress required by the criteria to exit focus status likely to result in sustained improvement in these schools?

### Exit Criteria for Focus Schools

We will also use traditional NCLB subgroups to determine when schools are ready to exit focus status. Schools must meet their performance and growth SPI targets for both the aggregate student group and for all subgroups; high schools must meet their graduation rate targets for both the aggregate student group and for all subgroups.

## 2.F PROVIDE INCENTIVES AND SUPPORT FOR OTHER TITLE I SCHOOLS

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (20)** Does the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system provide incentives and supports for other Title I schools that, based on the SEA's new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps? Are those incentives and supports likely to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students?

### Differentiated Accountability and Support

CSDE will classify each Connecticut school into one of five categories: Excelling, Emerging, Transition, Review, or Priority. Connecticut's proposed system differentiates support and interventions based on these classifications. The State Performance and Turnaround Teams will push the Excelling and Emerging schools by providing them with the information they need to drive their own improvement; build district capacity to support and intervene in Transition and Review Schools; and intervene directly and aggressively in Priority Schools.

***Excelling and Emerging Schools*** – With relatively high performance on standardized tests, graduation rates, and attendance, these schools do not often need additional support or intervention. However, we believe that even these relatively high-performing schools have room for significant improvement. The State Performance Team will ensure that it drives increased performance for all schools – including the highest performing – through transparent reporting and by comparing

schools that serve similar populations against each other. Many Connecticut schools, though they perform well when compared to the state as a whole, have much to learn from other high performing schools that likely outperform them in particular areas or with particular subgroups.

**Transition and Review Schools** – Though they are not among the State’s lowest performing, these schools still fall far short of preparing students for college and career. Districts will be responsible for driving improvement in these schools by conducting needs assessments, strategic planning, and implementing targeted interventions. The State Turnaround Team will ensure that districts engage in this process by requiring them to submit strategic plans and monitoring them to ensure the schools demonstrate progress.

**Priority Schools** — The state’s chronically lowest performing schools are in need of immediate and dramatic improvement. Through the Commissioner’s Network, the State plans to transform up to 25 schools over the next two years. A subset of these schools will join the Network in the fall of 2012-13, as the State Education Department’s Turnaround Team builds its capacity to intervene in more schools in later years.

## 2.G BUILD SEA, LEA, AND SCHOOL CAPACITY TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (21)** Is the SEA’s process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, likely to succeed in improving such capacity? Is the SEA’s process for ensuring timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in priority and Focus Schools likely to result in successful implementation of these interventions and in progress on leading indicators and student outcomes in these schools?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (22)** Did the SEA describe a process for the rigorous review and approval of any external providers used by the SEA and its LEAs to support the implementation of interventions in priority and Focus Schools that is likely to result in the identification of high-quality partners with experience and expertise applicable to the needs of the school, including specific subgroup needs?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (23)** Is the SEA’s process for ensuring sufficient support for implementation in Priority Schools of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources) likely to result in successful implementation of such interventions and improved student achievement?

**ESEA Flexibility Guidance Question (24)** Is the SEA’s process for holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their Priority Schools, likely to improve LEA capacity to support school improvement?

### **Establishment of State Turnaround and Performance Offices – Building State Capacity**

The CSDE is currently in the midst of significant organizational change designed to pivot the Department into a more proactive stance. The reorganization will shift the organization’s focus from monitoring for compliance and accountability to driving performance and continuous improvement.



Establishing the state Turnaround Office is an important step to increase Department capacity. The new unit will be led by a Chief Turnaround Officer, who will report directly to the Commissioner. This new resource will lead the direct intervention in Priority Schools and will ensure that districts effectively react to underperformance within their jurisdictions.

We recognize that many Connecticut districts do not currently have the capacity to support and intervene in schools effectively, but we believe that Connecticut is well-positioned to build on existing structures to increase district capacity. Specifically, Connecticut has a State Education Resource Center (SERC) and a network of Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) with a long history of providing information, professional development, and technical assistance to districts. With assistance from the SERC, the RESC Alliance, the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Turnaround office will ensure that districts have the resources they need.

### **Continuing Support for Districts – Professional Development**

Connecticut currently delivers statewide professional development through our Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). The CALI initiative focuses on sustainable district-level reform to foster accountability for student learning and ultimately accelerate the closing of Connecticut’s achievement gap. Through CALI, the CSDE provides district support and technical assistance in key areas to create a results-based district accountability system. The work focuses on training in the areas of instructional and school data teams, differentiated instruction, assessment and climate.

CSDE has created CALI training modules specifically with struggling schools and districts in mind, but all districts and schools across Connecticut can and should access CALI modules. The CSDE offers CALI training modules free of charge to educators in the state’s 18 Partner Districts, which have been identified as supporting the lowest-performing schools and are in various stages of developing, implementing and monitoring district improvement plans. Training modules are also free of charge to any Title I School identified as “in need of improvement.” Districts that do not qualify for this fee waiver are eligible to attend these trainings for a nominal fee.

CALI modules provide a common dialogue, language, and expectations for student achievement within the state. The CSDE has met frequently over the last three years with teachers’ union leadership from each of the partner districts to develop school improvement plans collaboratively. In addition, the CSDE and CAS facilitate an ongoing *Principals Leadership Series* that focuses on strategies for turnaround leaders for principals.

### **Removing Barriers and Duplication for Districts**

The CSDE believes our state’s school districts should be focused on raising student achievement and preparing our students for success in college and career, and the State should be a partner in that effort. But where state mandates, regulations, circular letters, and other requirements create unnecessary and overly burdensome barriers to districts’ work, the state needs to examine its practices – and find ways to get out of the way. In a recent survey of the State’s superintendents, two-thirds reported that the CSDE issues too many regulations. Over half of the superintendents identified state policies as a barrier to effectively recognize and promote staff.



**Teacher certification.** Connecticut proposes to simplify processes related to certification and professional development, as well as empowering districts to make these processes more meaningful. Specifically, CSDE will:

- consolidate the number of available certificates prior to the “professional” level certificate, from three to one “initial” level certificate;
- maintain the “professional” certificate on the basis of strong performance as supported by high quality professional development, not seat-time-based Continuing Education Units;
- establish a new “master” educator certificate for our most accomplished teachers attained on the basis of exemplary performance; and
- increase districts’ discretion to hire teachers from other states by removing barriers to reciprocity.

**Data Reporting Requirements.** In the short-term, CSDE will make teacher certification and data reporting less onerous on schools and districts by eliminating unnecessary barriers in teacher certification:

- Eliminate Continuing Education requirement and Master’s Degree requirement for attaining “professional” certification.
- Enhance District’s ability to seek Commissioner-approved waivers from Superintendent certification requirements.
- Hold harmless hard to staff districts for assigning educators to work that is outside of their certification area and eliminate financial penalties on individuals.
- Redefine or eliminate “shortage areas” designations.
- Expand reciprocity with educators certified in out-of-state institutions of higher education and alternative route programs through Commissioner’s waiver.

While many of the CSDE data requests have origins in state or federal law, CSDE has implemented some requests in ways that create unnecessary burden and expense for district central offices and schools. From now on, the Department will:

- Consolidate the forms it issues to request data from districts.
- Inform districts of these interim streamlined data collection procedures by March 31, 2012.
- Begin to convene quarterly meetings with a focus group of superintendents and district business administrators to foster ongoing dialogue about attaining more streamlined data practices.

**Red Tape Review Task Force.** Connecticut will convene a Red Tape Review Task Force to examine additional and comprehensive solutions to unnecessarily burdensome state regulations and mandates. The Governor will convene the Task Force as a component of his education reform proposal. The Task Force will meet over the next year to solicit input from superintendents, members of local boards of education, district and school business officials, subject area experts, and others on ways to streamline state regulations. The Task Force would develop and endorse solutions for implementation in the 2013-14 school year.

The Red Tape Review Task Force will consider technological solutions to improve sharing of data between school districts and the state. Additionally, the task force will engage the Legislative Commissioner’s Office of the Connecticut General Assembly to discuss ways to provide the

legislature with more accurate estimates of the costs borne by school districts from proposed statutes and regulations.

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